

## No.4 Making a MASH enquiry

### Before you make an enquiry

Unless the concern you have is an urgent safeguarding issue (see next section) there are a number of things that you should do before making an enquiry:

1. Get together with your safeguarding colleagues and use your Threshold Tool Threshold Matrix to identify whether the concerns reach level 3 or 4. Consider what the risk is to the child and how you can address this as Early Help, which agencies aren't involved that should be? Have all other avenues for help and support been tried? Early Help Advisors and Assistants can help you to identify which additional local agencies may be appropriate and also whether this family may be suitable to bring up at the Early Help Forum.
2. If you are still unsure as to the need for a MASH enquiry, use the MASH consultation line. Phone the main MASH phone number and ask to speak for a 'MASH consultation', if the line they put you through to is engaged, LEAVE A MESSAGE, your call will be returned as soon as the Social Worker is free.
3. Speak to the parents of a child for whom you have concerns, unless:
  - i. It will put the child further at risk
  - ii. It may lead to the destruction or contamination of evidence
  - iii. Where there is a concern around familial sexual abuse (also relates to non-family members residing in the same home)
  - iv. Suspected Fabricated or Induced Illness (FII)

If none of the above apply, discuss with the parent that you are considering making a MASH enquiry. See if you can identify from this conversation whether there are local solutions which can be put in place and which will negate the need for a MASH enquiry to be made, if you still feel that social care intervention is required, inform the parent that a MASH enquiry will be made, hopefully they will give their consent for this - the MASH Parent Factsheet is downloadable from the Devon CC website and will help with any questions. Parents may be difficult to contact, may be hostile or you may be concerned that the discussion will have a negative impact on a relationship you have built with them, you should still attempt to have a conversation with them, gaining their consent for the enquiry is preferable.

### Urgent concerns

An urgent concern can take many forms (e.g. recent non-accidental injury by a parent or a disclosure of familial sexual abuse) but to keep it simple, urgent is when you believe the child to be at imminent risk of significant harm.

In an urgent case it would delay the child being safeguarded if you complete an enquiry form so you should immediately dial the main MASH number and state that you wish to make an urgent MASH enquiry, if the line they put you through to is engaged, LEAVE A MESSAGE, if you have not heard from the team within 10 minutes, re-dial the main MASH number and ask to be put through to the MASH emergency mobile, details of your concerns will be taken, you should back this up with a written MASH enquiry form at a later point.

### Filling in the MASH enquiry form

On the MASH enquiry you should:

- Fill in your details and include contact details for where you can be reached.
- Include as many **details** as you know regarding **family members** and who is in the home.
- **Bullet point the risks to the child**, they should be the first details in the 'reason for contact' box.
- Make sure that your enquiry is **Significant, Relevant and Concise, SRC for short**. Lengthy, non-pertinent information may obscure the real concerns.
- In an SRC way **evidence** why you have a concern.
- In an SRC way inform of **any work already done or tried**, evidence how you have held the risk and what hasn't changed.
- Include **a little background**, don't assume that the TM reading the enquiry knows this family just because they are known to Children's Social Care.
- If there are no wider concerns for the family or for any siblings at your setting, add a line to indicate no wider concerns or concerns with the siblings.
- Additional, supporting documents (e.g. chronologies, transcripts of conversations) should not be sent at this stage.
- Remember to **date** the enquiry and to **indicate consent and/or knowledge**, if you have not informed the parents of the enquiry, clearly indicate your reasons why not, however be aware you may still be asked to inform parents before the enquiry can be accepted.
- **Most importantly**, this enquiry is for the benefit of the child, include their comments (if any) and always note what you consider to be **the impact on the child** of what your concerns are.

Once the enquiry is complete email it to the secure MASH email address, you will get an automatic reply stating that your email has been received. You will later be informed by letter or email as to the outcome of your enquiry.

### Challenging decisions

For details of a decision you can contact the MASH Education Researchers who can access the outcome summary. If you feel it is necessary to challenge a decision it is important that you do so, you should contact the person from the MASH who has sent you the letter or email, following this there is an escalation process to follow if you are still unhappy with a decision made.

#### Key contacts and links:

MASH telephone: 0345 155 1071

MASH workers: 01392 383000 (state the name of the person you wish to speak to)

Education in MASH researchers: 01392 388297 or 01392 388303

Babcock LDP - 01392 287200

MASH email: [mashsecure@devon.gcsx.gov.uk](mailto:mashsecure@devon.gcsx.gov.uk)

Early Help contacts:

<http://www.devonsafeguardingchildren.org/documents/2016/03/early-help-locality-contact-information.pdf>

Threshold Tool: <http://www.devonsafeguardingchildren.org/documents/2014/03/threshold-tool.pdf>

MASH downloads: <https://new.devon.gov.uk/educationandfamilies/child-protection/making-a-mash-enquiry>